

SSIPs: a role in sustaining sanitation services to the urban poor

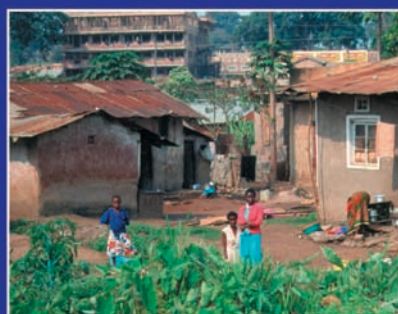
Introduction and scope

Hygienic disposal of excreta is a basic human need, but something that over 550 million people living in poor urban communities lack⁽¹⁾. Outbreaks of sanitation-related diseases are most likely to occur in these areas, with resulting impacts on health, wellbeing and the local economy.

In a number of poor urban communities, steps have been taken to address the challenge of inadequate sanitation services in innovative ways. In many instances where improvements are being seen, Small Scale Independent Providers (SSIPs) play a pivotal role in delivering sanitation services to households, increasingly working in partnership with the local authority, local community, NGOs and donors.

Two cases of particular interest exist where SSIPs are operating effectively in urban informal settlements of East Africa.

- The adoption of social marketing techniques in sanitation promotion in an informal settlement of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania is ensuring that an increase in demand for improved sanitation facilities is met with established and responsive delivery mechanisms
- A not-for-profit association is providing latrine construction services, together with essential pit emptying services, that are affordable to the residents of an unplanned area of Maputo, Mozambique.



Headline facts

- Inadequate sanitation seriously affects poor urban dwellers – intensified by high-density living, environmental degradation and minimal, if any, waste management.
- Space and access restrictions, construction costs, emptying difficulties and limited information about suitable latrine options hinder the development of effective solutions to the growing urban sanitation crisis.
- Most poor urban settlements are not formally recognized by governments. As such, they rarely receive basic infrastructure and services and the poorest households predominantly miss out.
- The majority of latrines in poor urban settlements are built and paid for by households themselves, sometimes with the help of a local artisan.
- Access figures can be misleading and can decrease dramatically when more stringent definitions are applied.

The 2005 cholera epidemic in Guinea Bissau started in poor urban settlements near the capital. Spreading to other parts of the country, it resulted in 450 recorded deaths⁽²⁾.

There are significant benefits to be gained from improving the role of Small Scale Independent Providers (SSIPs) in sanitation services.

- Increased recognition and supportive, market-friendly regulation from local government, offers SSIPs a greater degree of security to invest in the expansion of their operations.
- Enhanced sanitation services help to meet household demand for latrine provision and emptying, with more effective, affordable and appropriate levels of service.



The Nature and Role of SSIPs in Household Sanitation

SSIPs involved in the delivery of household sanitation services can be divided into 3 broad categories.

- *Manual labourers* carry out odd jobs such as digging pits, emptying latrines, sweeping and collecting refuse. They are often at the bottom of the social ladder, although they provide essential services that enhance the life of the community.
- *Latrine builders* undertake masonry work. Their main occupation is typically constructing houses, while building latrines offers additional, but minor employment, due to the infrequency of demand.
- *Carpenters* roof the latrine superstructure and add doors, if the builder does not have carpentry skills. They may be appointed separately by the house owner.

Most SSIPs are not formally trained, but learn skills on the job. They are typically paid on a daily basis and engage in other types of manual labour to complement their sanitation-related work. SSIPs do not usually market their services, but rely on word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied customers, or contacts made on the job, to secure further employment.

Overcoming Constraints

Significant constraints face SSIPs offering latrine construction and emptying services in poor, unplanned urban settlements. As a result many SSIPs who manage to stay in business are unable to enhance or expand their services beyond providing a limited operation. Pit emptying often creates hazards to both themselves and the environment. Such constraints include competition from other providers and limited options for the disposal of sewage sludge.

In the two cases described in this note, SSIPs are addressing certain key constraints in innovative ways, that provide valuable lessons for others. Table 1 identifies typical constraints and how they are being addressed in the cases of sanitation marketing in Dar es Salaam and pit emptying in Maputo.

Table 1. Constraints facing SSIPs and how they are being addressed

		How they are being addressed in ...	
Issue	Typical constraint facing SSIPs	Dar es Salaam	Maputo
Competition from other providers	Untrained builders and emptiers often provide lower quality, cheaper services, while better-resourced organizations can offer a higher level of service.	Understanding and working to concepts of "good design" enhances user demand for improved standards. Responsiveness and adaptability can offer an appropriate level of service at affordable prices.	With limited competition in Maputo, this is not yet a major issue for the SSIPs – although as demand grows for pit emptying, it will need to be addressed.
Customer contact	Clients are unable to make contact with the builder and find out relevant information.	A new latrine centre has the potential to act as the focal point for information and contact with builders and support staff.	An ADASBU office provides customers with access to a range of services (pit emptying and others).
Available skills	Many informal SSIPs offering building and emptying services lack the skills to provide high quality services. They are unable to explain the advantages and disadvantages of various latrine options.	Trained builders have enhanced their understanding of a range of design options, including cost and maintenance implications.	With minimal external support, management staff have the relevant skills to run the services provided by the SSIPs as an effective business.
Access to tools and equipment	Latrine builders and emptying service providers usually own basic tools. Working alone they cannot afford to risk investing in costly equipment, although these could improve their level of service.	Working as part of a registered local administration enables builders to access pooled resources and equipment (such as moulds for latrine slabs).	ADASBU provides operators with appropriate pit emptying equipment to meet the needs of householders in the area. Small-scale motorized equipment allows for safer and quicker pit emptying, improving the livelihoods of the SSIPs.
Emptying and sludge disposal	Inadequate, or no access to, sewerage networks makes it difficult to dispose of sludge cost-effectively. Pit emptiers are often prosecuted for dumping sludge in open water bodies or directly onto open land.	Pit emptying services have not been part of the social marketing programme in Dar es Salaam. Further support will be required if these services are to be provided effectively and so ensure sustainable excreta disposal.	The local government waives the fees for sludge disposal at the sewage works, although licences to discharge sludge into local sewers would be more cost effective for the SSIP operations.

SSIPs and Sanitation Marketing

The potential of the sanitation market in urban settlements is significant. Achieving the market potential will however require improved promotion, coordination and partnerships, in which SSIPs play a central role.

Sanitation marketing combines generating demand for sanitation with establishing delivery mechanisms to respond to that demand. Only then can the market expand in a sustainable way. The marketing approach is based on understanding user (or customer) motivation, barriers to change and preference in relation to latrines. It seeks to overcome barriers to change partly by offering a range of sanitation options to suit different customers, while also enhancing the customers' perception of the importance of hygienic latrines.

See WELL Factsheet *The Process of Sanitation Marketing (2004)* for more details on the marketing approach. <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/well/resources/fact-sheets/fact-sheets.htm> (Jun 06)

SSIPs marketing sanitation in Dar es Salaam

In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania the application of commercial marketing techniques has been applied in an effort to increase the demand and uptake of improved household latrines in a low-income urban settlement. With no subsidy available for sanitation hardware, customers can choose latrine products from a catalogue of designs to suit their needs, desires and level of affordability.

A group of latrine builders (*fundis*) have been extensively trained in aspects of a range of latrine designs. Concepts of "good design" are based on the findings of formative market research carried out within the local community.

A latrine centre has been established in order to provide a focal point for both awareness-raising and the supply operations of latrine building. The centre offers a contact point between the public and the builders, while making available relevant information on design options and the cost of different latrine components. In a demonstration area, customers can view and select latrine components such as pit lining materials, latrine slabs, pedestals and squat plates. The centre can also offer flexible payment arrangements to suit financial restrictions faced by most households in the catchment area.

The Centre registered as a Community Based Organization in 2004 and is recognized by the Municipal Council.

Up- and Down-Stream Provision

To date the marketing approach in Dar es Salaam has been applied to 'up-stream' elements of sanitation service delivery such as raising awareness, creating demand, providing information and choice, digging pits and constructing latrines.

A key 'down-stream' element for ensuring sustainable excreta disposal will be effective and efficient services to empty pits and desludge septic tanks. To achieve this will require sufficient manpower and resources, supported by recognition, both within the community and from the local authority, of the value of the service provided.

In Mozambique, a community-based association has been successfully providing both latrine construction and pit emptying services to residents living in an unplanned area of Urbanizaçao, Maputo.



SSIPs Providing Pit Emptying Services in Maputo

ADASBU (Association for the Development of Water and Sanitation in Urbanização Quarter) is a small community-based association operating in Maputo, Mozambique. In partnership with external support agencies (initially MSF, now WaterAid), ADASBU has developed the means to operate both a pit latrine construction and pit emptying / septic tank desludging service. It is the emptying service that is of particular interest, as it is one of the few examples in Africa where a mechanical service is being operated to a high degree of success.

By operating two pit emptying machines (one Maqunieta and one Vacutug), ADASBU is able to access and service the majority of pit latrines found in Urbanização. Access for the mechanical equipment is helped by the fact that even in the unplanned settlements, a good width is maintained in the lay-out of the streets.

Skilled management staff and full time operators commit to providing a good service, maintaining operational records of trips made, charges and accounts. From these records profit and loss balances can be identified, helping ADASBU to operate the service as a viable business, rather than an ad hoc operation.

Recognition and support from local government

The local government in Maputo does not provide formal pit emptying services in Urbanização, but supports ADASBU by waiving the charge for sludge disposal at a sewage works, 7 miles away.

Given the limited amount of equipment ADASBU currently has available, this journey increases their operating costs and the risk of equipment breaking down. A regulated form of sewer-based disposal, as occurs to a degree in Kibera, Kenya (Box 1), could help reduce these costs and risks, increasing ADASBU's efficiency and profitability.

Box 1: Local government support to sludge disposal: Kibera, Kenya

In 2004, out of around 30 private operators of mechanical emptying trucks in Kibera, 10 were issued licences by the local municipality to discharge sewage sludge into the city's sewerage network. Manual pit emptiers, who service about 30% of household latrines in Kibera, have no access to sewer disposal. This results in the indiscriminate dumping of sludge, often into local streams.

Social marketing to enhance sustainability

Operating on a commercial marketing basis, ADASBU can identify customer attitudes and preferences, to ensure that they provide the service people want at a price they can afford. Approaching their service in a business-like manner, ADASBU can develop their business model to incorporate promotional techniques and a customer-focused approach to service delivery.

Since the start of ADASBU's latrine-building programme in 2003, over 440 improved (pit) latrines have been built, achieving 100% latrine coverage in Urbanização. These new latrines have relatively small pits (up to 2m³) that will take 3-5 years to fill. ADASBU will need to scale-up its emptying operations to meet the increase in demand that will result as these newly-constructed latrines fill, from 2006 onwards.

In addition to serving existing customers ADASBU's customer-base needs to grow, to ensure long-term viability of the service. This will require promotional and marketing activities to take place in regions where they do not currently operate.

The future for ADASBU

As they consider their future, ADASBU faces a number of challenges for financial and commercial viability associated with household affordability, charge-setting and competition.

Poorer households in Urbanização rarely pay for a latrine pit to be fully emptied, preferring instead to pay for the removal of the minimum amount necessary to enable the latrine to continue operating. This increases the operating costs of the emptying equipment which is sized to handle larger quantities at a time, as well as increasing operator costs. It also provides an unpredictable demand and resulting cash flow for ADASBU.

With limited recognition from the local authority of ADASBU's work and limited competition from other service providers, customers are prone to drive down the price they will pay for the emptying service. Minimal environmental regulation discourages households from ensuring that latrines remain operational and sanitary. This will also affect the level of interest in pit emptying services.



From Construction to Emptying: the Continuum for Social Marketing

Marketing latrines is achieving a degree of success in Dar es Salaam: demand for improved sanitation and latrine construction is growing both within the pilot community and surrounding areas. As pit latrine use grows, eventually the need for effective pit emptying services will also increase. It is essential therefore that SSIPs of sanitation services can both capture that market and be sufficiently resourced to provide the full range of services required.

Marketing pit emptying services is a fundamental stage in ensuring sustainable excreta disposal in poor urban communities. Creating demand for emptying services means that households are less likely to return to practising open defecation once a pit is full, as well as equipping SSIPs to respond to that demand. Additional support (financial, technical and institutional) is needed if the latrine builders in Dar es Salaam are to be in a position to offer such services.

Partnerships for sustainable service provision by SSIPs

For the vast majority of poor urban households, the only feasible improved sanitation solution is a form of on-site (pit) latrine. Ensuring sustainable provision of sanitation promotion, latrine construction, operation, maintenance and emptying services requires an effective partnership between the service providers (SSIPs) and a range of key stakeholders, including the local authority, local NGOs/CBOs and external support agencies (ESAs).

When each partner fulfils the role to which they are best suited, services are more likely to be responsive to user (customer) demand, affordable, cost-effective and ultimately sustainable. Box 2 highlights one such partnership that has been piloted in South Africa and the potential benefits to be gained from it.

Examples of the roles and advantages that each key stakeholder can bring to the partnership are illustrated in the following Figure 1 and Table 2.

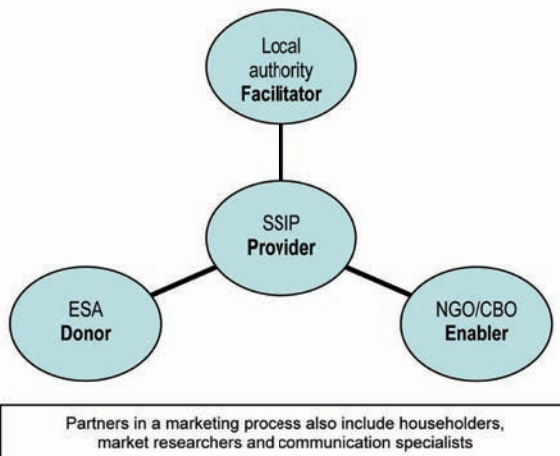


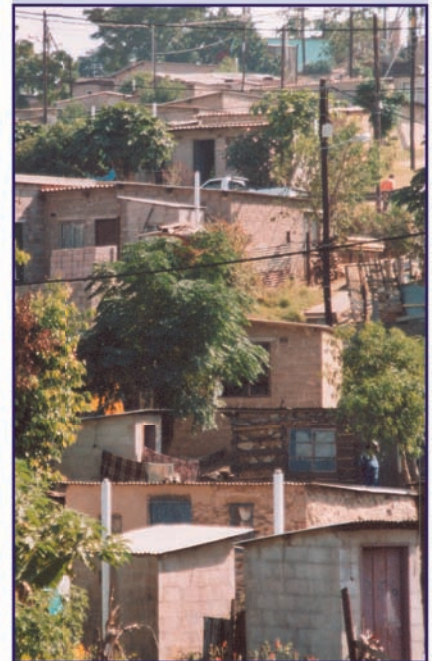
Figure 1: SSIPs and key supporting partners for sustainable services

Box 2: A partnership for pit emptying in Durban, South Africa.

eThekweni Municipality (Durban Council) has recognized the key role played by manual pit emptiers who serve the informal settlements around Durban, South Africa. eThekweni Municipality sought to scale-up the institutional model of a pilot project (2003-2004), in which they employed a main contractor to manage the franchised services of a number of local pit emptying operators.

The anticipated result would be a partnership between the contractor, operators, local community groups and municipality. Service providers then have access to appropriate equipment and tools, as well as opportunities to develop small business enterprises. In gaining recognition, relationships between the emptiers and local residents would be improved.

Results of scaling-up the approach are not yet known at this time.



In Partnership with Sanitation SSIPs

Table 2: Key roles and advantages of strategic partners

Partner	Role	Advantage
SSIP	Provides the services (may also include marketing and providing information).	Flexibility to respond to changing demand.
Local Authority (Municipality)	Facilitates the provision of services (e.g. develops policy, regulation, and recognizes the role of SSIPs).	Usually mandated responsibility to provide services. Can introduce appropriate policy, legislation and market-friendly regulation to enhance service provision.
Local NGO/CBO	Enables sanitation improvements (e.g. supports skills training, community liaison, monitoring).	Less bureaucratic and more cost-effective than larger institutions (e.g. local authority). Closer to target community and SSIPs.
ESA (donor)	Funds supporting elements (e.g. promotion, equipment).	Capacity to address the problem at scale. Can influence government budgets, policy, plans, etc.

Key lessons

- Marketing sanitation, when correctly adopted, brings benefits for all involved. Householders get an improved toilet of their choice, SSIPs gain recognition and increased employment opportunities, private sector agencies make profits, NGOs and donors move closer to achieving coverage targets, and local governments move closer to achieving their service delivery obligations and improved public health.
- External support to SSIPs needs to be carefully targeted, such that SSIPs can continue to provide services once the support is withdrawn. Establishment of the latrine centre in Dar es Salaam and provision of technical equipment in Maputo, are examples of targeted support that can enable services to become established and expand to a point where they can become self-financing.
- Marketing techniques have so far concentrated on the 'up-stream' elements of sanitation provision such as awareness raising, demand creation, promotion and building. To ensure sustainable sanitation services to poor urban households requires the adoption of suitable marketing techniques to 'down-stream' elements of pit emptying and desludging services.
- As demand for emptying services grows, SSIPs who typically provide these services will require sufficient recognition, resources and support to respond to that demand. Effective cooperation between SSIPs and government at various levels, in partnership with other relevant stakeholders, is essential if these services are to remain sustainable.

⁽¹⁾ JMP (2005). *Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation*, data for developing countries, WHO / UNICEF. http://www.wssinfo.org/en/35_san_dev.html Jun 06

⁽²⁾ UNICEF (2005). *Water supply, hygiene and sanitation in rural areas of Gabu, Caheu and Tombali regions and in peri-urban areas of Bissa*, UNICEF, Guinea Bissau

This briefing note identifies the significance and role of Small Scale Independent Providers (SSIPs) in sanitation service delivery to poor urban households.

Drawing on experience in Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya and South Africa, it highlights the impact of effective marketing approaches, recognition and partnerships in enhancing the role and opportunities for SSIPs, to ensure sustainable sanitation services to poor communities.

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* Full reports are available at www.Lboro.ac.uk/well

**Briefing Note compiled by
Rebecca Scott of WEDC**

**Photographs by A Godfrey, D Saywell,
R Scott and S Sudgen**

**DFID Resource Centre in Water, Sanitation
& Environmental Health**
www.Lboro.ac.uk/well

For further information, contact:
WELL
**Water, Engineering and Development Centre
(WEDC)**
Loughborough University
Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK

Email: WELL@Lboro.ac.uk
Phone: 0 (44) 1509 228304
Fax: 0 (44) 1509 211079
Website: <http://www.Lboro.ac.uk/well/>



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